

The Care Bears and the Big Cleanup

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By Bobbi Katz ♥ Illustrated by Richard Kolding



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The Care Bears and the Big Cleanup

By Bobbi Katz ♥ Illustrated by Richard Kolding

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Lisa and Simon Ross were excited. Today they were going to the woods for a picnic. They had just moved from the big city to the country—to the very same place where their father had grown up!

Of course, things were different now. There was a mini-mall where Dad used to help the farmer down the road sell vegetables. And all that was left of the farm was the farmhouse. The apple orchards and cornfields were gone too, replaced by rows of houses.

"But I'm sure the woods haven't changed," said Mr. Ross. "We'll eat our picnic near the pond. It may be too warm for ice-skating and too cold for swimming, but just being there is a treat. You'll see!"





High above the clouds, in Care-a-Lot, the Care Bears were playing happily, without a care in the world! Then one by one they began to notice that the colors in the rainbow leading down to earth were growing pale.

"Just look!" said Tenderheart. "And my tummy tells me there's a certain family that's going to need Care Bears. Let's go. We've got work to do!"

So Share Bear, Friend Bear, and Cheer Bear climbed on a rainbow, right behind Tenderheart. Down, down, down...they slid. All the way to the woods.





Meanwhile, the Ross family had just started down the path into the woods.

"The path is wider than it used to be," said Dad. "That makes sense. There are more people using the woods these days."

"Or abusing them," said Mrs. Ross.

She didn't need to explain what she meant. Soda cans, paper bags, and wads of aluminum foil were lying along the path.

"I guess nobody cares anymore," said Simon.

"Well, I care," said Lisa, stopping to pick up a plastic six-pack holder. "These things can choke birds."





“They certainly can!” said Tenderheart as the Care Bears landed right smack in front of the Ross family.

Speechless, the family stared at the Bears in amazement.

At last Mr. Ross was sure that his eyes weren’t playing tricks on him.

“‘Take care the bears don’t get you!’ That’s what my father used to say when I went off to play in these woods as a kid. He told me there used to be bears here, but he never told me they could talk!” said Mr. Ross.

“We’re Care Bears,” said Tenderheart.







"We're here because we care about you. And the world you live in!" said Cheer Bear.

"I can't quite believe my eyes. Or my ears," said Mrs. Ross. "But I'm certainly happy to know you. The world needs all the help it can get."

"People need to learn how to share—both with each other and with all the living things on this green planet," said Share Bear.

"And talking about sharing," said Mrs. Ross, "would you Care Bears like to share our lunch?"

It didn't take the Care Bears more than a second to say "Yes, thank you!"



"Look at this!" said Mr. Ross. The others sighed.

The mossy clearing near the pond was a real mess. Old tires and broken fishing rods stuck out of the water. But Mr. Ross was pointing to some tracks at the edge of the pond. Animal tracks! Deer and raccoons were still living in the woods! That made everyone smile.

"Maybe the woods aren't ruined after all," said Simon.

"Of course they aren't," said Cheer Bear.

"But they will be," said Lisa, "unless we *do* something."

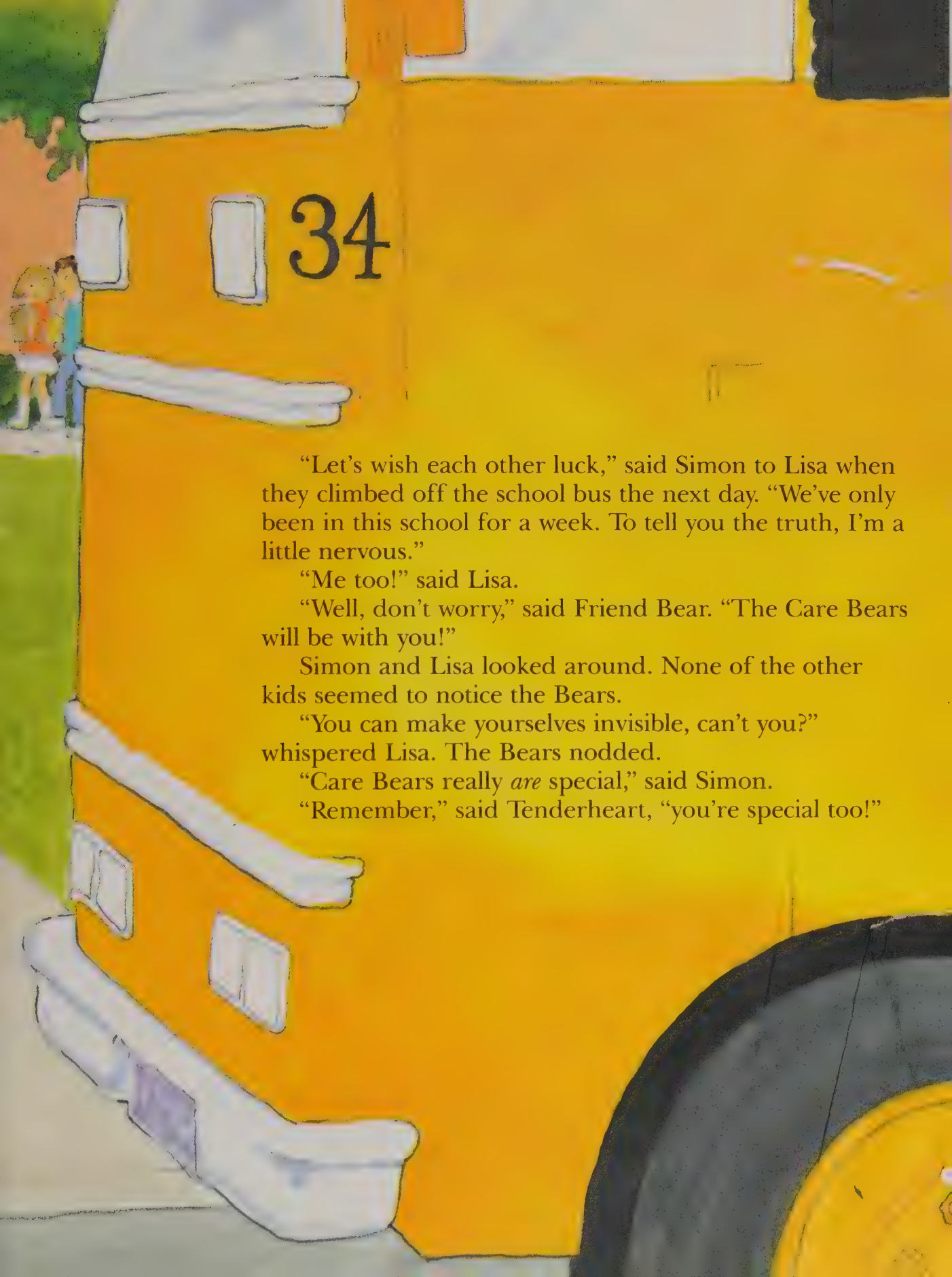
"And that's where the Care Bears come in," said Tenderheart.





As everyone sipped cider and munched on carrot sticks and cookies, the Care Bears helped their new friends make a plan.



A yellow school bus with the number 34 on its side. Two children are standing near the front of the bus. The bus has white trim around the windows and doors. A large black tire is visible in the bottom right corner.

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"Let's wish each other luck," said Simon to Lisa when they climbed off the school bus the next day. "We've only been in this school for a week. To tell you the truth, I'm a little nervous."

"Me too!" said Lisa.

"Well, don't worry," said Friend Bear. "The Care Bears will be with you!"

Simon and Lisa looked around. None of the other kids seemed to notice the Bears.

"You can make yourselves invisible, can't you?" whispered Lisa. The Bears nodded.

"Care Bears really *are* special," said Simon.

"Remember," said Tenderheart, "you're special too!"



As soon as Lisa got to her classroom she spoke to the teacher.

“Lisa has something important she wants to talk to us about,” said the teacher when the children were seated.



Lisa stood up. She saw Tenderheart perched on a window sill and Cheer Bear sitting on top of the globe. Suddenly, she didn't feel nervous anymore.



She showed the kids photographs her dad had taken when he was a boy. The pond was clean and beautiful. There wasn't a scrap of litter anywhere. She told how the woods didn't just belong to the people who used them. They belonged to plants and animals and fish and birds and bugs. And even to people who hadn't been born yet!

"Maybe because I come from the city, I don't take the woods for granted," said Lisa. "But unless all of us start caring, we'll have a garbage heap instead of someplace beautiful."



"I have an idea," said a boy named Billy, who just happened to be sitting close to Tenderheart. "Let's have a big cleanup! Our whole class—maybe even the whole school—could spend a day picking up the litter and cleaning out the pond."

"I bet the newspaper would take our picture and write a story," said Mallory. "Everyone who saw it would start appreciating the woods. They'd think twice before they dumped junk in the pond or just tossed litter around."

Before Lisa knew it, the class was voting to have a big cleanup. Lisa saw that the Care Bears voted too.



Almost the same thing had happened in Simon's class! That night the Care Bears came to dinner. There was a town meeting, and Mr. and Mrs. Ross were going. They wanted to ask the town to support the Big Cleanup. Tenderheart went along with them.

Share Bear, Cheer, and Friend helped Lisa and Simon do the dishes "the Care Bear way."



“It saves water and saves time too,” said Share Bear. He dunked soapy dishes in a plastic dishpan filled with hot water and then into another for a second rinse, instead of running each dish separately under the water.



Meanwhile, at the town meeting, there were some people who didn't think much of the idea of cleaning up the woods.

"Who needs 'a place to appreciate nature'? If the birds and bees don't like litter, that's their problem!" said one man.

"Yeah, that pond sounds like a great place for my motorcycle club to get together," said his friend.

Staying invisible, Tenderheart snuggled up on the mayor's lap. Then one by one he gave gentle hugs to each member of the town council. When Mr. Ross made a proposal that the town support the Big Cleanup, the mayor herself seconded the motion. And the council not only decided to have the town dump truck help but also voted to put up a sign at the entrance to the path and place a trash barrel there as well.



The next day *The Valley Record* had a story about the town meeting and a special interview with the mayor.

"Look at that!" said Friend Bear, reading over Mr. Ross's shoulder. "Time for Sharing and Caring: Or Is It Too Late?"

"It's not too late yet!" said Cheer Bear.



All over town people were reading about the Big Cleanup. The date was set for the first Saturday of the next month.

An elderly couple is shown from the chest up. The woman on the left has short, curly white hair and is wearing a purple top. The man on the right has a mustache and is wearing a green and white striped shirt. They are both looking down at a newspaper held by the man.

"I'll organize the ladies to
sew burlap bags to collect
the junk," said Mrs. James.

A man with short brown hair and black-rimmed glasses is wearing a purple suit jacket over a white shirt and a red and yellow patterned tie. He is smiling and holding a newspaper open in front of him.

"What a good idea!"
said Mr. Banks.

A young woman with dark, curly hair and a red headband is wearing a yellow turtleneck sweater. She is smiling and holding a newspaper open in front of her.

"That sounds like fun,"
said a teenager.

A man with a full red beard and a blue cap with a yellow square on the front is wearing a red and black plaid shirt. He is smiling and holding a newspaper open in front of him. The newspaper has the title "The Valley Record" visible.

"Get a load of this!" said the
man who had made fun of the
Big Cleanup.



The day of the Big Cleanup, a crowd of people gathered at the entrance to the woods. The Care Bears were there too, although most people couldn't see them. And this time Bedtime Bear was with them. Like all Care Bears, Bedtime could whisper something in someone's ear. And that person would think it was his or her *own* idea!

The mayor said, "Thank you for showing how much you care. Let's work quietly as we clean up the woods so that we disturb the creatures that live here as little as possible. Let's look and listen. There haven't been any bears here for years, but we might see some squirrels or hear some birds."

Simon and Lisa looked at the Care Bears and tried hard not to giggle.









And as the children and grownups alike filled burlap bags with junk and hauled tires and other stuff out of the pond, all of them felt the special beauty and quiet of the woods in a new way. A way nobody except Lisa and Simon could explain.





Well before the day of the Big Cleanup, the Care Bears had given just the right town official an idea. Of course, he thought it was his very own. He saw to it that trash was sorted for recycling the Care Bear way. There were separate trash barrels for glass, cans, paper, and plastic. As the people filled them up, other workers emptied them into big bins on the town truck.

By the end of the morning, the town dump truck was just about full. Almost everyone was still in the woods.

"Look," said Tenderheart, pointing to a sign the town council had put up at the entrance to the woods. It said: SHARE THESE WOODS WITH CARE.

Above the sign a bright, sparkling rainbow stretched up toward Care-a-Lot.

"I think we can go home now," said Friend Bear. And that's just what the Care Bears did!





SHARE

THESE WOODS

WITH

CARE





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“What a mess!”

That's what Lisa and Simon say
when they go to the woods for a picnic.
There's yucky litter everywhere they look.

Find out how the Care Bears help
the kids save the woods—and start
some wonderful changes in their town.

You might even get some good ideas
about what you can do

to make your own neighborhood
a cleaner, better, happier place.

The Care Bears have the key—
doing something to show you care!

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